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ABSTRACT

This report contains the recommendations of Colorado Governor Romer's Task Force on Parent Education and Involvement, a task force comprised of parents, advocates, and professionals charged with discussing the importance of parenting, the state's role in supporting parents, and the best lessons about the outcomes of parent education, support, and involvement. The report begins with an outline of factors contributing to the current emphasis on parenting. The bulk of the report is comprised of a discussion of the task force's recommendations: (1) make parent education, support, and involvement programs a central theme in counties' welfare reform plans; (2) create a new statewide fund for prevention efforts that include parent education, support, and involvement; (3) hold parent education, support, and involvement programs accountable for improved parent and child outcomes by evaluating their impact; (4) ensure that parent education, support, and involvement are central elements in child care programs, schools, churches, youth organizations, health care agencies, and other local, state, and national organizations; (5) establish a permanent state-level body within the executive or legislative branch of state government to coordinate and govern policies and funding of parent education, support, and involvement programs; and (6) launch a media campaign that carries the message that parenting is the most important job a person can have and that community well-being depends on parents doing the best job possible. A set of guiding principles for policymakers is delineated. The report concludes with a list of task force and resource group members. (Author/KB)

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Governor Roy Romer's Task Force

on

PARENT EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT

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STATE OF COLORADO

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

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Roy Romer
Governor

May 7, 1997

Dear Fellow Coloradan:

There are few measures of success as important as how well we raise our children. During my time as Governor, I have devoted substantial efforts to making Colorado the very best place for families and children to thrive. This report by my Task Force on Parent Education and Involvement continues a comprehensive movement I have supported during my time as Governor to bolster community-based efforts on behalf of children and to help give parents the tools they need to do their job right. This report articulates a vision for all Colorado families and children, and outlines specific steps to be taken to accomplish that vision.

We are at a critical turning point in our state. We have real opportunities to develop responsible solutions and to make significant reforms in the way we serve families and children. We also have the chance to ensure that every child has access to the basics he or she needs to be successful. One of those basics is capable, stable parenting. After all, parents are the most influential people in a child's life. Facing an increasingly complex world, all parents should have the guidance and support they need to raise healthy children.

I believe that parents, grandparents, teachers, doctors, ministers, businesspeople, and all other community members must strive to make our children feel valued and appreciated. There is no more important task for either the public or the private sector. We must all recognize the importance of families and children as the key to our economic and social productivity.

I hope you will carefully review the findings of this task force and then join me in an effort to create an environment in which all Colorado families are able to raise children who become competent and caring adults, contributing members of society and effective parents themselves.

Sincerely,

Roy Romer
Governor

AN AGENDA FOR PARENT EDUCATION, SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT IN COLORADO

Recommendations of

Governor Romer's Task Force

on

Parent Education and Involvement

MAY 1997

The challenges of parenthood are daunting, but its rewards go to the core of what it means to be human—intimacy, growth, learning and love. It is difficult to think of an enterprise that is more deeply private. Child rearing is inseparable from daily domesticity—that messy accumulation of meals and rent payments, laughter and laundry that fill a home. The kind of care parents give to children, the context they create for their growth, and the framework they create for later learning spring from the rhythms of that life and from the values that give it meaning. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine an enterprise that has greater impact on public life—on the productivity of our citizenry, the vitality of our culture, and the strength of our public institutions. The time, resources and energy that parents give to their children influence the children's success as students and their contributions as citizens.

Starting Points
Carnegie Corporation of New York

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INTRODUCTION

Families matter. Families are responsible for the most important job in America: raising our next generation of learners, workers, and citizens. The decisions—both major and mundane—that parents make everyday as they interact with their children help determine whether the children will have the capacity and the opportunity to develop into capable, loving, productive, responsible, creative, self-confident and healthy individuals.

Few undertakings touch the future as directly or profoundly as raising children. Yet families—regardless of race/ethnicity, geography or socioeconomic status—are under increasing stress as they take on the demands of this responsibility. The patterns and rhythms of family life have changed dramatically in the past several decades. More parents are in the workforce, more children are being raised in single-parent families, more children are poor, and more families are isolated from their extended families and other sources of nurture and support.

Over a seven month period in 1996, a Governor-appointed task force comprised of parents, advocates, and professionals met to discuss the importance of parenting, the role (if any) of the state in supporting the job of parenting, and the best lessons about the outcomes of parent education, support and involvement. This report is the culmination of the work carried out by Governor Romer's Task Force on Parent Education and Involvement.

TIME FOR ACTION

Teachers, ministers, nurses, social scientists, even judges, have known for decades the importance of the role of parenting. Why now is the subject of parenting a topic of interest for public policy makers? Why now is there an interest in asking the thorny question of whether state government has any business in promoting good parenting?

Three factors combine to make this an opportune time for public policy makers to take action:

1. **We know more now than ever before that the quality of children's environment and social experience has a decisive, long-lasting impact on their development, well-being and ability to learn.**

   One can hardly pick up a national newsmagazine these days without reading about the latest research on the brain development of young children.

Experience and common sense have been confirmed by over two decades of research: the entire community benefits from helping parents and families prosper. When families are able to create and sustain environments that promote healthy child development, their children are more likely to become competent caring adults, contributing members of society, as well as effective parents themselves.

The risks are also clear. When families break down and children do not receive the right nurturing, all of society bears the far greater costs associated with child abuse and neglect, poor school achievement and dropout, adolescent pregnancy and childbearing, juvenile delinquency, physical illness, and alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse.

2. Families today face unprecedented challenges in raising their children.

During the past 30 years, dramatic social, demographic, and economic changes have transformed the American family. More children live with only one parent, usually their mothers, and too many lack the consistent involvement and support of their fathers. More mothers, as well as fathers, hold jobs and go to work each day. Yet children are now the poorest group in America. Moreover, regardless of ethnic and economic background, parents and children spend less time together.

Parents know very well what they are up against, and they are struggling to do the best they can for their children. In today's complex world, no family has within itself all of the knowledge and resources necessary to meet its members' needs. Every parent has used some sort of support system outside of his or her immediate family—whether it was a network of friends and neighbors, a sports team or scouting group, or a doctor, teacher or other professional.

3. Coloradans are demanding programs that are effective, efficient and that are held accountable for results.

Government policy in any number of areas—health care, taxes, the economy, crime—touches children. However, public confidence in the ability of government to solve social problems and to enhance community life seems to be waning. Taxpayers are demanding more for their money. The perception of the average citizen is that government resources have been squandered and the results are no better and, in many cases, they are worse. People are fed up with schools that do not educate, welfare programs that do not lead to self-sufficiency, and prisons that do not stem the tide of crime and violence.

In public opinion polls, Coloradans express a willingness to help children in

need and families in crisis. However, citizens want programs to be effective, accountable and get at the root problem to move families toward self-sufficiency. In essence, they want programs to work. As a result, the way that government provides and finances services is changing dramatically.

The implications for policymakers are profound.

GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON PARENT EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT

The Governor's Task Force on Parent Education and Involvement believes the time is right for a major statewide initiative to promote parent education, support and involvement in Colorado. After months of study and deliberation, the Governor's Task Force on Parent Education and Involvement concluded that ***there is no more important role and function in our society than that of parenting***. It is imperative that community and state leaders ensure that parents are supported and valued; that our institutions make it possible for parents to be involved in all decisions affecting their children and their family; and that parents at all stages of life are able to get education and coaching on better understanding and guiding their children at any age. Parenting is a lifelong commitment and the need to learn and brush up on skills does not go away when the child reaches the age of three or twelve or even eighteen.

Of course, communities and neighborhoods must be the first and last place where families are supported and the successes of parenting are celebrated. But, in between, everyone—individuals; employers; schools; civic, community and religious organizations; health care providers; the media and government at every level—has a role to play in making sure that the job of parenting is valued and supported above all other roles.

To that end, the Governor's Task Force offers the following recommendations. In the remainder of this report, each recommendation will be reviewed in detail to begin framing the discussion about what is needed and from whom.

- Make parent education, support and involvement programs a central theme in counties' welfare reform plans.

- Create a new statewide pool of funds to be block-granted to counties on a pilot basis and used for building the capacity of prevention efforts (e.g. family support, school readiness, preventive health care, quality child care) that include parent education, support and involvement components.

- Hold parent education, support and involvement programs accountable for improved parent and child outcomes by evaluating their impact.

- Ensure that parent education, support and involvement are central elements in child care programs, schools, churches, youth organizations, health care agencies, and other local, state and national organizations.

- Establish a permanent state-level body within the executive or legislative branch of state government to coordinate and govern policies and funding of parent education, support and involvement programs.

- Launch a broad-based media campaign that carries the message that parenting is the most important job a person can have and that the well-being of our communities depends on parents doing the best job possible.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR POLICY MAKERS

The task force wrestled with the fine line between government involvement and government intrusion in the lives of families. In the end, the members agreed that state and local governments, in partnership with private community organizations, must develop and expand policies that favor community-based parent education and family support programs. These programs should enhance parents' knowledge and skills, and help provide the support parents need to raise their children and become actively involved in their children's lives. Government must step up to the plate in areas of ensuring capacity, especially in making it possible for effective programs to be available to all parents who want them. Beyond that, government must align its policies and practices across all agencies to ensure the best results for all families. To that end, the Task Force agreed on a set of guiding principles for policy makers. These include:

- Parent education, support and involvement must be universally available and accessible and must especially reach out to parents who are at marginal levels of survival. There must be effective and extensive outreach to diverse parents, inclusive of all racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

- The basic relationship between programs and family must be one of equality and mutual respect. All programs working with children must create avenues for parents to participate in meaningful ways and for breaking down the barriers to an effective parent/program partnership.

- Parent education, support and involvement programs and activities must reflect what parents want for their children. There must be a variety of programs to accommodate the wide variety of families. In addition, programs must advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the parents and families served.

- Furthermore, programs must be flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues. Since parenting is a long-term process, different forms of help must be available and accessible during different developmental phases of the children, from pre-conception (preparing people for parenthood) through, at least, the child's 12th grade.

- Parent education and family support programs must involve parents not only as resources to their own families, but as resources to other families, to programs, and to communities. Programs must enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth, and children.

- Programs must affirm and strengthen diversity in family structure and function, diversity in ethnic, cultural, racial, and linguistic identities; and diversity in social and economic class. Programs, approaches, and curricula must be inclusive of single-parent, three-generational, blended, and "traditional" families; respect and reflect the richness of cultural diversity and variety of traditions and values; and incorporate realistic suggestions for problem-solving and involvement.

- Parent education, support and involvement programs must be accountable for reaching outcomes that strengthen and preserve families and that are sustainable and effective over the long-term. Those programs demonstrating success should be maintained and expanded to the degree necessary to serve additional families wishing to participate.

- Programs must support children's optimal physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development.

LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT EFFECTIVE PARENT EDUCATION, SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

As part of their deliberations, the task force reviewed the learnings of some of the most effective programs around the country. Effectiveness is defined as having demonstrable, positive outcomes for families. The task force was especially interested in learning from those programs that seem to lead to better school achievement, reduce child abuse, reduce anti-social behaviors, increase parental competency, and make for stronger families. These are the lessons learned:[1]

- **Parent education must be linked to ongoing family support.**
  Family education and support programs are most effective when they are connected with other quality resources that enhance family life, including child care and after school programs; recreational activities and cultural events; income support and assistance with housing; employment, literacy and job training; and health care. In order to be most effective, parent education and support programs must be able to link families to this array of needed services.

- **Effective programs involve multiple stakeholders who reflect community resources and concerns in the planning process.**
  Each stakeholder brings his or her own perspective, strengths, and resources that influence how the planning group collaborates, perceives the community and sets program goals. Successful planning efforts ensure that critical information and viewpoints are not left out. Programs should be planned in the context of services that are already offered in the community, as well as the specific needs and interests of the participants to whom services will be provided or targeted.

- **Successful parent education and support programs often reflect a combination of central authority and local autonomy.**
  The challenge of a statewide initiative is to strike the appropriate balance between community autonomy and top-down prescriptions. One effective model has been for the state to set a framework of program goals and objectives, core service requirements and administrative guidelines. Local communities have the flexibility to determine when, where, and how to provide services, including linkages with community organizations and outreach approaches.

[1] In a companion document to these recommendations, a report from the Center on Human Investment Policy provides a more detailed discussion of these lessons learned, together with profiles of programs. The programs included in the report illustrate the range and diversity in program purpose, approach, providers, financing and delivery.

- **Effective programs have linkages with other agencies at the local level.**

  The need to provide comprehensive services to high-risk families is clear. Collaboration with other public and private community agencies broadens the range and increases the accessibility of services for families participating in parent education, support and involvement programs. Experience suggests that family education and support programs can contribute to the effectiveness of interagency efforts in a unique way because they are two-generational in scope—designed to facilitate both child and parent development.

- **Effective statewide programs maintain the "community" element in community-based family support and education programs.**

  The most common strategies for accomplishing this purpose include requiring local assessment of community assets and capacities as well as requiring programs to have local advisory boards with broad representation from the community.

- **Effective programs treat participants as a vital resource.**

  In effective programs, parents serve as resources for one another, participate in program planning, decision-making and governance, and advocate for themselves in the broader community.

- **Successful fundraising is broad-based, continuous and creative.**

  For both state-sponsored and independent programs, sufficient and stable funding remains a problem. Consequently, funding for parent education, support and involvement programs tends to be as creative and diverse as the programs themselves. Programs pull together money from diverse sources, cross categorical funding lines, mix public and private funds, and build on what participants can bring or raise. From their inception, effective programs seek to build local community support, expressed through local dollars and through local support for state funding.

- **Successful parent involvement programs focusing on student achievement include parents and families from earliest childhood through high school.**

  Regardless of income, education level, or cultural background, all families can—and do—contribute to their children's success. Becoming involved at school also has important effects for the family. Parents develop more positive attitudes toward the school, become more active in community affairs, develop increased self-confidence, and enroll in other educational programs. This strengthens the family not only as a learning environment, but also as an economic unit.

- **Successful programs provide effective staff training, supervision and support.**

  Because of the highly personalized and individualized nature of parent education, support and involvement programs, competent and committed staff is critical.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS AND PLAN FOR ACTION

The task force recognized that defining recommendations is not enough. Simply making recommendations without laying out an action agenda would only prove to be an academic exercise. The stakes are too great. Therefore, the next section of this report revisits each of the major recommendations of the task force and suggests actions to be taken to achieve each proposal.

RECOMMENDATION #1: **Ensure that parent education, support and involvement programs are included in welfare reform block grants to counties.**

Under the new welfare reform legislation, Colorado is creating a new context for counties and communities to use federal dollars in ways that can assist families as they move into long term employment. Family support programs, broadly defined, meet the demand for effective programs that help families help themselves. Family support is not a service in the traditional sense of the word. It is a proactive approach to preventing problems by strengthening the functioning and capacity of families.

The opportunity exists for communities to set priorities, within boundaries, and to engage new, more supportive service delivery systems that might focus, at least in part, on preventing crisis. An important lesson that has meaning in this new policy environment is that the most successful family support programs are the ones which are embedded in a broad continuum of support services available to the family in their own community.

ACTIONS:

- County plans for implementing Colorado's welfare reform legislation must draw upon the experience and expertise of providers of parent education and support programs.
- Providers of parent education, support and involvement must move beyond their typical role of providing services to also become active participants in shaping the new welfare reform system.

RECOMMENDATION #2: **Create a new statewide pool of funds to be block-granted to counties on a pilot basis and used for building the capacity of prevention efforts (e.g. family support, school readiness, preventive health care, quality child care) that include parent education, support and involvement components.**

By choice or default, most existing programs follow a strategy of starting parent education and support initiatives on a small scale with modest funding. Pilot projects provide the opportunity to develop expertise, organizational capacity and a broad constituency. If the pilot sites are well chosen, they can demonstrate the versatility and applicability of the program to different parts of the state. Furthermore, this proposal is an example of the current focus on state to local government devolution.

The target areas for these state dollars should be those programs which are already in existence, have been developed to meet the culturally relevant needs of the community, and can prove their impact on the local community. By funding existing programs and increasing their capacity, those programs will be supported in their efforts to achieve the guiding programmatic principles adopted by this task force. In addition, funding capacity-building efforts creates reform on voluntary efforts rather than mandates.

ACTIONS:

- In 1998, the General Assembly should create and fund a pilot program for parent education, support and involvement to be carried out in targeted counties. Monies must be made available for a variety of approaches including, but not limited to, Home Instruction Preschool Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), Parents As Teachers, Strengthening Families, and Family Preservation/Family Support programs. The monies for the pilot program should not be taken from currently supported family support programs; rather, the pilots should be funded with "new money."

- Once created, these funds should be allocated the funds to those counties who submit strategic plans, developed in cross-agency community planning processes, that set outcomes for improved parenting and better child well-being. This pool of money should build upon existing community initiatives (e.g. Family Centers, Family Resource Schools, Prevention Initiatives, Family Preservation/Family Support).

- State government should provide sustained technical assistance with regard to program planning and implementation issues, provide ongoing training for administrators and providers, develop a peer network and partnership relationship between state and local programs.

RECOMMENDATION #3: **Incorporate parent education, support and involvement programs and philosophies into existing "gateway organizations" such as child care centers, schools, churches, health care organizations, and other local, state and national organizations.**

Family support is a preventive strategy—its services are designed to be universally helpful to all families, long before any identified problems arise. Programs should strive to be inclusive and to model a cohesive community that respects and honors diversity. However, without substantial outreach efforts to community "gateway organizations," there is a danger that programs will attract and serve only the families that are easiest to reach. Because public resources are too scarce to assure the same level of services to all families, some targeting of program services and funds likely will need to occur. Creative approaches to targeting include:

- Creating universal programs and requiring them to serve a certain percentage of at-risk populations [risk factors generally include poverty, adolescent pregnancy and childbearing, single parenthood, and drug and alcohol abuse].
- Creating a universal program that also provides more intensive or different services for certain groups.
- Locating programs in targeted communities that have high risk factors.
- Using sliding scale fees and scholarships for some services and a number of free programs open to all.

ACTIONS:

- Parent education and support groups should be established in local communities across the state.

- Business should implement policies and programs responsive to employees' family needs. An investment in such services not only has a positive impact on the productivity of the current work force but also is an investment in the work force of the future.

- Local business might also help by donating space, equipment and supplies to an existing program, or by offering employee expertise on a *pro bono* basis.

- Professionals, parents and others in the community should share their skills with family support and parent education centers. Health professionals, teachers, and social workers can offer their talents and knowledge to assist families. Lawyers, accountants, and those with advertising experience can help with administrative responsibilities. Seniors can serve as mentors for parents or fill the role of grandparents to children.

- Providers of parent education, support and involvement should work with local, state and national efforts to publicize and disseminate information about the importance of nurturing families as the key to the community's economic and social productivity.

RECOMMENDATION #4: **Authorize a permanent state-level body, within the executive or legislative branch of state government, to coordinate and govern policies and funding of parent education, support and involvement programs.**

The organizational capacity of both state-level and local agencies strongly affects the implementation of family support and education policies. A key ingredient of success is the assignment of parent education, support and involvement programs to a state-level agency or entity that has some level of organizational autonomy. A clear mandate of authority also appears critical for successful implementation. The choice of the state agency that is responsible for parent education and family support programs usually determines the kind of local agencies that will develop and implement the programs (e.g. department of education - local boards of education; social service department -community-based organizations).

ACTIONS:

- The General Assembly should empower an existing body or create a new governing/coordinating body to oversee all state-funded parent education, support and involvement activities. This body should transcend several state agencies and have longevity that outlasts the partisan political process. This coordinating body should deal with the issue of fragmentation between agencies and prepare cross-agency priority areas for legislative sessions. These priorities should be identified for coordinated action, pooled funding, redirection of available funds, and targeting of any new funds. Existing bodies which should be considered to assume such a role include, but are not limited to: the Children's Cabinet, the Colorado Children's Trust Fund, the Colorado Department of Education's Prevention Initiatives, or the Department of Human Services.

- State government should take steps to make all child-serving systems—health, mental health, child care, education, child welfare, and juvenile justice—more responsive to families' needs.

- All state agencies that fund programs for parents and children should work together to establish a common application process for programs applying for funding or other assistance, a common database of programs and contacts, and a common reporting format.

RECOMMENDATION #5: **Develop a broad-based media campaign that enhances public awareness of the importance of parenting and also increases public awareness of available programs and services.**

There are countless examples of how broad-based public communication has created concern, built constituencies and raised the saliency of community issues. For example, less than 25 years ago, environmentalism was a concept embraced by a few elite. Through a drumbeat of media attention, public service announcements and other efforts, the movement now claims the loyalty of a strong majority of Americans. It has wrought widespread policy and lifestyle changes. The critical importance of parent education, support and involvement must be seen as a similar environmental issue.

All communication strategies and activities should contain culturally and linguistically appropriate materials.

ACTIONS:

- The local media should develop positive, prevention messages that accompany other newsworthy stories (i.e. segment on respite care programs following a news story about child abuse); devote time and coverage to the creation of a "parenting month;" develop an action-oriented, extended campaign that creates a network of concerned parents and providers; create and air retrospective pieces by local celebrities on how they were most influenced by their parents.

- A local professional advertising agency should develop and disseminate a clear message and a campaign plan for the public promotion of parent education, support and involvement programs and values.

- Local programs should widely distribute resource brochures that emphasize the importance of parenting and offer referral sources for parents in public places such as medical offices, hospitals, libraries, Head Start and child care centers, schools, churches and synagogues, malls, grocery stores, pharmacies and community recreation centers.

- Local parent education, support and involvement programs should conduct "home visits"—on-site tours of their facilities and first-hand experience of their programs—for legislators, business people, and other decision makers. It is essential to help decision makers understand not only the issues affecting families and children, but also the actual programs working on their behalf.

- State departments should publicize existing parent education, support and involvement programs funded by state agencies.

RECOMMENDATION #6: **Require that evaluation be integrated into, and become an ongoing and funded part of all parent education, support and involvement programs. Funders should allocate 7 to 10 percent of total granted funds to evaluation, thereby providing essential time and resources (e.g. training, technical assistance, capacity-building) to programs for both internal (dedicated staff time/person) and external (consultant) evaluation procedures.**

The two major barriers to quality evaluation are lack of funds and lack of congruence between evaluation and program interests. However, program evaluation is critically important and should be an integrated, funded component of all parent education, support and involvement programs. Evaluation is one of the mechanisms by which programs gain feedback to make improvements and to remain responsive. Evaluation is not intended to be punitive nor should it be an undue administrative burden.

By regularly assessing program performance in relation to its goals, its visions, its missions, its objectives, and the principles of parent education, support and involvement—and by making changes in response to these assessments—a program remains focused and effective. A quality evaluation approach includes, but is not limited to, auditing regulatory compliance, tracking process indicators such as counting the number of clients served, and outcome evaluation (e.g. how the program improves the well-being of the consumer).

ACTIONS:

- The General Assembly should allocate up to 10% of the new pool of funds for the pilot project to evaluate the impact of the parent education, support and involvement activities.
- The foundation community should include standards for evaluating all program components in every Request For Proposal (RFP) process, as well as in plans for administering programs.

- Local parent education, support and involvement programs should use evaluation methods consistently and regularly.

RECOMMENDATION #7: **Convene a group to develop standards, requirements, guidelines and available resources for process and outcome evaluation of parent education, support and involvement.**

This group should have broad stakeholder representation including, but not limited to, families and practitioners who represent human services, education, early childhood, perinatal, at-risk youth and special needs programs. In addition, this group should have scholastic representation that can generalize beyond consumer satisfaction and include community outcomes. While this group is not intended to create another bureaucratic level, it will require some ongoing charge in order to ensure validity, accountability and continuous improvement.

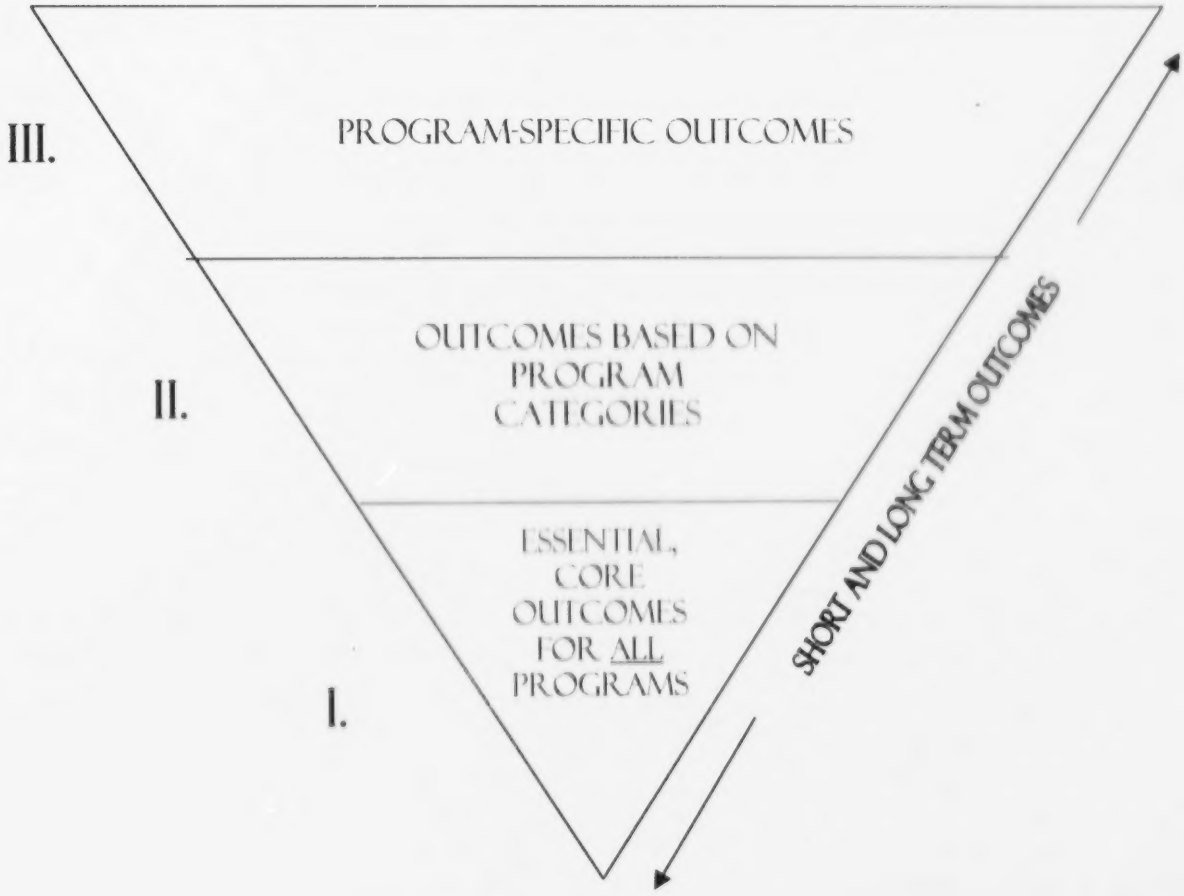
As part of these standards and requirements for evaluation, this group should create a three-tiered evaluation model (see diagram below). The first tier should consist of a small set of essential, core outcomes for all programs that provide parent education, support or involvement. The second tier should be outcomes based on program categories (e.g. home visitation, school involvement, respite care). The third tier should consist of individual program outcomes specific to each local initiative.

In addition to identifying core outcomes for parent education, support and involvement programs, the group should be charged with identifying benchmarks, determining a process for conducting evaluations, and identifying formal technical assistance groups and resources to guide internal and external evaluations.

ACTIONS:

- The Governor should appoint a Blue Ribbon Panel to develop such standards, requirements, guidelines and available resources.
- The Blue Ribbon Panel should create a three-tiered evaluation model for parent education, support and involvement programs (see diagram below)

- The Blue Ribbon Panel should provide guidance to programs in developing program-specific outcomes.
- The Blue Ribbon Panel should work with and coordinate with state program managers who oversee parent education, support and involvement initiatives.



DEFINITION OF TERMS

PARENT: Any primary caregiver who is rearing children and supporting their growth and development by providing, and being the primary decision-maker on essential needs such as emotional nurturing, financial support, health care, education, and emergency assistance.

PARENT SUPPORT: This is the overarching concept in promoting healthy families that is designed to fill the gaps that families today are experiencing in their support systems. Parent support programs share the goal of empowering and strengthening adults in their roles as parents, nurturers, role models, and providers, but pursue that goal in different ways.

PARENT EDUCATION: These programs may be found in freestanding drop-in centers, seminars and workshops, or ongoing groups that meet in a variety of settings. Their purpose is specific: to build parents' skills and confidence in providing a nurturing environment for their children.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: These programs are often linked to schools and other institutions and are designed to support and encourage parents' engagement in their children's education and other activities.

PARENT LEADERSHIP: This concept includes programs that have extensive parent participation in decision making. Parents take active roles in advocating for their children, themselves, and others. Parents "drive the system."

MEMBERS

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JO MOSBY, Goals 2000 Panel member, Denver

THE HONORABLE PAT PASCOE, Colorado State Senator, Denver County

ADELE PHELAN, **Executive Director, Clayton Foundation, Denver (Chair of Task Force)**

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STATE OF COLORADO

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

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Roy Romer
Governor

B 007 96

EXECUTIVE ORDER

CREATING THE TASK FORCE ON PARENT EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT

WHEREAS, Colorado is recognized as a state committed to children and families. A number of public and private initiatives are dedicated to making Colorado the best state for a child to be born and to grow and to give every child the best possible start in life, and

WHEREAS, the key to creating safe, healthy futures for our children is good parenting, strong families, supportive communities, and a sense of personal responsibility; and

WHEREAS, parents are and should be the most important people in their children's lives, and

WHEREAS, all parents must be prepared for and supported in their parenting, so they will be able to do the best possible job of nurturing and protecting their children, and

WHEREAS, working with all parents requires knowledge on the impact of culture on families, including cultural norms and values, patterns of communication, family structures, spirituality and its impact on concepts of health and healing, and help-seeking and problem-solving behavior; and

WHEREAS, changes in the labor force have increased the pressure that many parents feel about the quantity and quality of time they have with their children; and

WHEREAS, the growth in single-parent households -- spurred by divorce, changing demographics, and out-of-wedlock childbearing -- has increased the number of parents raising children without the emotional and material support of a second parent and has increased the lack of visibility of father figures in many children's lives; and

WHEREAS, increased mobility, as parents relocate to pursue educational and employment opportunities, has resulted in fewer families living near relatives and friends, and being connected to neighbors and community institutions who have traditionally provided informal support and assistance; and

WHEREAS, in today's complex world no family has within itself all of the knowledge and resources necessary to meet all of its members' needs. All parents need some kind of help at one time or another; and

WHEREAS, when families are able to create and sustain environments that promote healthy child development, their children are more likely to become competent and caring adults and contributing members of society, as well as effective parents themselves, and

WHEREAS, when families break down, all of society bears the far greater costs associated with child abuse and neglect, poor school achievement and dropout, adolescent pregnancy and childbearing, juvenile delinquency, physical illness, and alcohol and drug abuse; and

WHEREAS, parenting education and family support is about prevention and the most effective prevention efforts occur within the family and at the local level; and

WHEREAS, all parents want to be the best parents possible, want to encourage their child's development and are willing to learn new skills, information and attitudes; and

WHEREAS, parents are active decision-makers and are the experts on their children;

WHEREAS, parent education and family support efforts enhance overall parental competence and self-efficacy, parents' knowledge of child development, and parents' capacities to parent more effectively; and

WHEREAS, ensuring that young children are ready for school and have the highest educational expectations and increasing the parent's ability to be an effective agent of those successes is good business in Colorado.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Roy Romer, Governor of Colorado, by virtue of the authority vested in me under the laws of the State of Colorado, DO HEREBY ORDER THAT:

1. The Task Force on Parent Education and Involvement is hereby created. It shall consist of no more than 25 members representing major state and local initiatives which impact parents, financing experts, legislators, and parents. All members shall be appointed by the Governor and shall serve at his pleasure. Members shall serve without compensation. The Governor shall appoint the chair of the Task Force.

1. The activities of the Task Force shall be supported and coordinated by First Impressions, Governor Romer's early childhood initiative.

3. The Task Force shall have the following duties:

   a. Develop and maintain policy and procedures and a work plan for the task force's operation.

   b. Review current parent education, parent involvement, and family support programs.

   c. Develop a long-term statewide implementation plan for effective parent education and involvement programs.

   d. Develop a long-term strategic financing plan for parent education, involvement, and support.

   e. Develop a broad-based communication strategy for the public to become engaged in supporting parent education and involvement.

   f. Develop an effective evaluation plan which measures the impact of parent education and involvement programs for the purpose of increasing the amount of resources that go into these prevention-oriented programs.

   g. By December 15, 1996, submit recommendations for determining how the General Assembly can implement changes in current policy which will ensure that all families have access to quality family support programs.

4. The Task Force shall meet at times and in places designated by the chair.

5. The Task Force shall be reviewed no later than December 31, 1996, to determine appropriate action for its continuance, modification or termination.

GIVEN under my hand and the Executive Seal of the State of Colorado, this thirty-first day of July, 1996.

Roy Romer
Governor

Special thanks to
the Colorado Parent Information and Resource Center
for making this project possible.

For more information, contact:

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